

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1407

Financial Services Committee
Hearing "Financial Literacy Education: The Effectiveness of Governmental and Private
Sector Initiatives"
Opening Statement for Congressman André Carson
April 15, 2008

Thank you, Chairman Frank and Ranking Member Bachus for holding this important hearing today on efforts to promote financial literacy. I want to thank the witnesses today for their hard work in reaching out to consumers to educate them on the importance of debt management and asset building.

Today, as citizens are due to turn in their taxes, they face increased financial difficulties as foreclosure rates soar, health care and energy costs continue to rise, and in many states like my own, there are substantial job cuts. In this turbulent time in our economy, it is especially crucial that consumers become knowledgeable about their own financial situation and that we take steps to ensure our children receive proper financial education to plan for their future.

In my district, groups such as the Indianapolis Asset Building Campaign are working to increase financial literacy in the city, especially among moderate and low income individuals. The campaign was spearheaded by my grandmother, Representative Julia Carson, Former Mayor Bart Peterson, Momentive, Purdue Cooperative Extension, Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership, the Boner Center, Junior Achievement, the Internal Revenue Service and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

It has been proactive in connecting taxpayers with financial literacy information such as free preparation services, tax credit information, the availability of low or no cost savings and accounts and predatory lending. These are the kinds of efforts needed to stem the kinds of cyclical debt low and moderate income individuals frequently become trapped in.

I look forward to hearing your testimony today and working with my colleagues on the Committee to find the most efficient and effective ways to target information to enable consumers become savvy on the complex financial products we have in the marketplace and prevent them from becoming dependent on credit or victims of predatory lending.